

BOOK NOTICE

WELCH, WILLIAM C. and GREG GRANT. 1995. **The Southern Heirloom Garden.** (ISBN 0-87833-877-2, hbk.) Taylor Publishing Company, 1550 West Mockingbird Lane, Dallas, Texas 75235, (214) 819-8100, \$29.95. 200 pp.

An essential book, not just for gardeners but for historians as well, especially those of us who have longed for a trip back in time to visit with our great grandparents for advice on how to tend our gardens. Though our ancestors are now silent, they live on in the legacy of plants they nourished—plants still thriving today in the southern garden and *The Southern Heirloom Garden* is their voice.

Looking beyond the obvious to the ancestral 'bones' of a southern garden, the authors show us how the many diverse cultures sowed their own seeds of gardening acumen and created these ethnic gardens. In time they blended into a horticultural heritage that is uniquely North American. Welch and Grant give us lists of plants and techniques on their culture and how to landscape heirloom gardens (practical advice you don't find on growers tags at nurseries.) Explanations of Latin names placed throughout the text rather than in a separate chapter, is a good way of educating the lay person on scientific aspects without intimidating. On the contrary, it draws the garden lover into how definitive Latin/Greek names are and makes them less formidable. Text is spiced here and there with observations such as: [Regarding the shrub *Arborvitae*] ... 'Some plants don't deserve all the grief we give them. Like I tell my mamma about our "occasional" undesirable relatives and ancestors; you can't hide from your true heritage. And if you didn't know who they were, you might even like them. She doesn't buy that, though.'

The book is divided into three sections: Restoring Southern Gardens; eight chapters of the various cultures that influenced southern gardens: Native American, Spanish, French, African-American, English and German; a list of 67 heirloom plants of the south and resources for purchasing southern heirloom plants. Climatic zone requirements are listed on each plant along with a corresponding map.

The cropping and design techniques used on some of the photographs are a bit heavy handed. It's a shame the photographs are not just left alone. Overall, the design of the book does not do the content as much justice as it deserves, but read on anyway, it's worth it.—*Linny Heagy*.